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Part Four of a four-part report, designed to identify, synthesize, and evaluate shared services research and development efforts throughout the nation, presents a model to disseminate information concerning shared services information to rural educators. The discussion does not prescribe a "best-fit" model but presents several with an expanded outline of one, incorporating the expertise of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory and the cooperative efforts of contiguous states in a regional area. Recommended is the utilization of existing agencies, such as USOE, state departments of education, colleges and universities, and professional organizations. Also included is a discussion of the available dissemination media and their relative effectiveness and cost. Two basic assumptions were deemed appropriate: (1) that motivation for dissemination of information lies primarily with the desire to implement dissemination procedures, not with testing given procedures, and (2) that financial consideration preclude nationwide dissemination. Related documents are RC 003 404, RC 003 405, and RC 003 406. (DK)

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Dissemination Strategies and Devices

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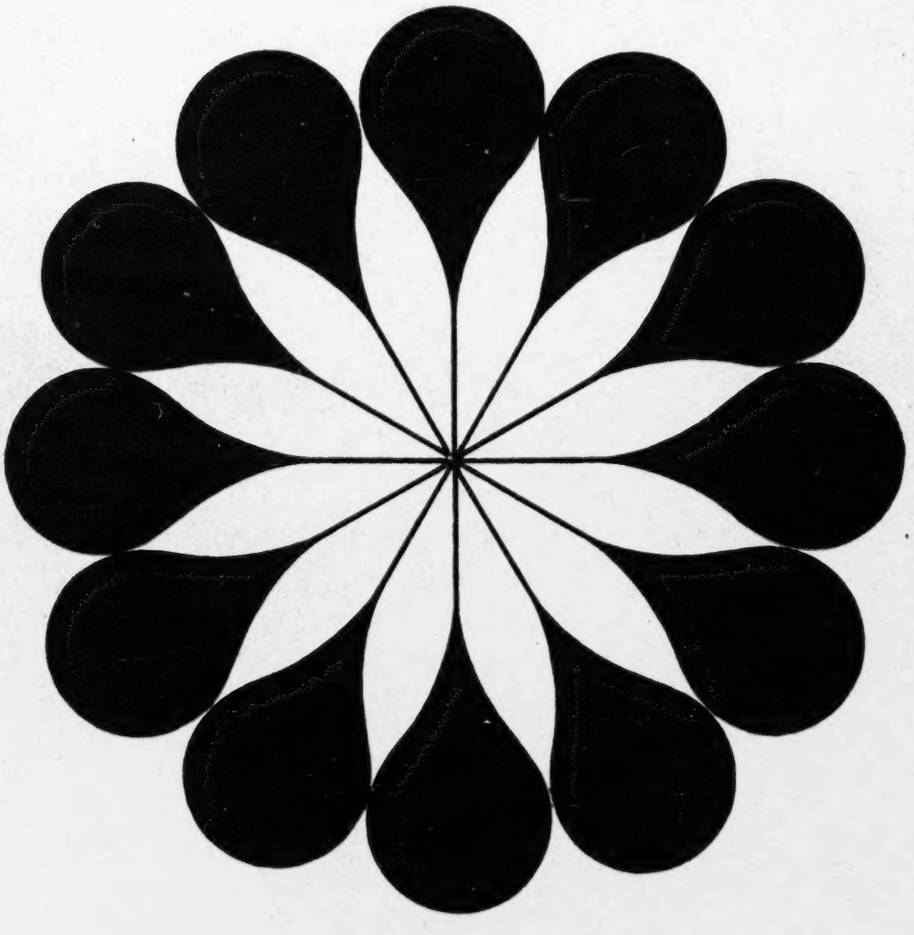
Part Four
Final Report for Phase I

RURAL SHARED SERVICES

An interpretative study
conducted by

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
with
Northern Montana College



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Dissemination Strategies and Devices

Part Four
Final Report for Phase I

RURAL SHARED SERVICES

Identification, Synthesis, Evaluation
and Packaging of "Shared Service" Research
and Developmental Efforts in Rural Areas

An interpretative study conducted under
U. S. Office of Education contract
OEC-0-8080583-4532 (010) by

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The research reported herein was performed pursuant to a contract with the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education.

FOREWORD

To accelerate improvements in rural education, usable and dependable information on ways to bring this about must be readily available to local opinion leaders and change agents. In preparing for Phase II of the Rural Shared Service project, staff members assembled information on potential dissemination devices. Contributing to this information have been professionals in advertising and media, staff members from rural sociology departments of colleges and universities, State Departments of Education, regional accrediting associations and leaders in rural education.

Other parts of the final report for Phase I of the Rural Shared Service project are:

"Project Report"--A definition of rural shared services and the organizational patterns under which shared service activity exists, a description of the activities which focus on the needs of pupils and teachers; an outline of activities which facilitate the educational program; and an assessment of the effects of sharing services

"Annotated Bibliography"--Information on 68 publications identified as having particular value to those concerned with the improvement of rural education

"Location of Shared Services"--Information on 215 shared service projects in 48 states

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INTRODUCTION

The Rural Shared Services Project, funded under the U. S. Office of Education "to put the significant findings of educational research and development into the hands of practitioners," expressly proposed the preparation of "a model to disseminate these information packages to opinion leaders and change agents in rural communities."

However, the enclosed discussion advocates no "best-fit" model, but rather permits the reader the option of selecting that model which he feels will best reach his target audience. To begin with, a decision must be reached concerning optimum coverage. Is it more desirable to utilize a single state as a prototype for dissemination of information to other states? Is the most desirable model one that would provide information to the nation? Or will optimum benefit accrue by selection of several contiguous states?

An important factor in the development of answers to the above questions is the availability of funds to finance a dissemination venture. The avenues described in the enclosed dissussion permit a variety of "cost" options.

To design one dissemination prototype that would serve as a vehicle for dissemination of every conceivable educational idea is impossible. Rather, a variety of approaches are suggested from which an appropriate

model may be developed. The content to be disseminated determines the nature of the device or combination of devices selected.

For example, a combination of several of the included devices might prove more successful than the employment of a single device.

Response to Specific Statements Contained in Original Project Proposal[1]

The proposal for the Rural Shared Services Project under which this study was conducted named specific factors which would be considered in the development of a model for dissemination of information. These factors included:

1. Processes will be examined whereby opinion leaders in small communities and their roles may be identified.
2. The nature and extent of the information and communication resources available in the region, problems involved and the suggestions for alleviating them.
3. The nature and extent to be communicated and alternative uses of media for dissemination to these key groups.
4. The strategies and timing that appear crucial to successful dissemination of this information.
5. The relative costs and efficiencies of various methods available.
6. The use of field visitations, seminars, experts, and consultants as a means of disseminating successful shared services practices.

Interviews with persons directly involved with shared service projects throughout the nation revealed little that would describe "the processes whereby opinion leaders are identified." The assumption of most respondents was to the effect that in small communities the chief school administrator and the school board members are in fact the educational opinion leaders. The process for identification then becomes a matter of examining the

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[1]Ray Jongeward, Rural Shared Services: A Project Proposal. Portland, Oregon: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, March 1968, p. 6.

listings of such persons--listings available from the various State Departments of Public Instruction. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of the Pellegrin and Goldhammer studies of three Oregon communities.

> Both our nominations data and our case histories show that in all three communities the top ranking influentials in education are persons involved in educational affairs by virtue of the official positions they presently occupy or have occupied in the past. The most influential individuals are administrative officers--especially the superintendent, but also his assistant superintendents and an occasional principal--and former members of the school board.[1]

While the initial concept of the Rural Shared Service Project had anticipated an evaluation of "the nature and extent of information and communication resources available" in a given region, subsequent discussions with personnel from the U. S. Office of Education resulted in a departure from this limited application. Hence, the examination of communication resources available in a single region has not received the focus originally planned.

With regard to the third specific statement, the alternative uses of media for dissemination have been described. The content to be communicated is summarized in Chapter 7 of the Project Report.

Statements four and six have also been discussed and considered in the Project Report and related material is contained in this report, although not specifically categorized.

Statement five, however, can be usefully expanded and substantive material related to the costs and efficiencies of various methods of dissemination appears in Appendix A of this report.

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[1] Roland Pellegrin, "Community Power Structure and Educational Decision-Making in the Local Community," A paper presented at the 1965 National Convention of the American Association of School Administrators, Atlantic City, New Jersey, February 15, 1965.

GEOGRAPHICAL CONSIDERATION

Implied in a discussion of dissemination and/or communication approaches is the question "Whom do you wish to reach?" and for "What purpose?" If the purpose is to test the effectiveness of a given dissemination model, then the smaller--more discrete--geographical boundary becomes desirable. The input of information can more readily be controlled and "pretest/posttest" criteria are more easily applied to measure change.

If, on the other hand, adoption of the educational concept is of prime concern then the broader geopolitical boundary would seem more desirable. As greater numbers become involved or acquainted with the idea, the greater is the probability that the idea will be adopted.

National Dissemination

If an idea or concept has proven its worth in bringing a better education to youth and if one believes that a child should have equal educational opportunity regardless of the geographical chance of his birth, then any educational improvement must be disseminated on a national basis.

Multistate Contiguous Region

Because multistate organizations do now exist for the purpose of disseminating educational information, and because these organizations have illustrated the effectiveness of having innovations adopted, it is conceivable that a region involving several contiguous states could form a compact to disseminate the concept of shared services. This might be uniquely appropriate for the more rural states, since the highest rurality can be described as (1) those states comprising "the deep South," (2) the upper Midwest, and (3) the Rocky Mountain West.

Noncontiguous Selected States

For purposes of testing any given dissemination model, it might be desirable to select several states that are noncontiguous. The advantage to this approach would lie with the opportunity to apply different dissemination approaches to each of the selected states and evaluate their appropriateness and effectiveness.

Single State

Because each state exercises a great deal of autonomy in the organizational patterns within its boundaries, and because the concept of shared service often involves organizational structure, a single state may be a better prototype for testing a dissemination model than a region within a state. Additionally, each state will usually be large enough to contain each of the communications media discussed earlier, whereas a region within a state may not have its own newspaper, professional journal, or television outlet.

Regional Educational Service Agency

Because the movement to regional intermediate educational units appears to be fast-growing, and because the concept of the intermediate unit has historical basis, one might utilize the formation of such a unit as a testing ground for a dissemination package. By identifying a rural region comprised of many school districts that seem to possess a commonality of community reference--a region that currently does not extend its intermediate unit beyond the "county" political boundary--it becomes possible to focus on that region for the establishment of a larger intermediate unit. Through information disseminated to that region, one could then measure the effectiveness of the model employed.

PERSONNEL UTILIZATION

Especially trained personnel are often utilized to disseminate information relative to educational concepts. Among these are the following:

State Department of Public Instruction Personnel

Because of their traditionally authoritative and consultative role in the educational structure of a state, personnel from the respective State Departments of Public Instruction are often influential in disseminating educational ideas and concepts. A difficulty ever present in utilization of this group, however, is their equally traditional shortage of manpower.

Professional Organization Personnel

Because of their vested interest in the improvement of education as it relates to their specific field, persons employed (or elected) to serve professional groups, such as the Department of Classroom Teachers, are usually very receptive in programs that are designed to upgrade their profession. If this group can be shown the advantage of an educational concept as it applies to their organization, they can be employed to disseminate the desired information.

College Instructors

Havelock notes "the primary repository of all the expertise of universities is the faculty, (and) the university is the focal center of all the expert resources, stored cultural heritage, scientific knowledge, and scientific knowledge-building capacity of the entire culture."[1] While

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[1] Ronald G. Havelock, "Dissemination and Translation Roles," as cited in: Terry L. Eidell and Joanne M. Kitchell, Knowledge Production and Utilization. Columbus, Ohio: University Council for Educational Administration, 1968, p. 94.

noting that the typical faculty member probably does not like to think of himself as "a linker," he adds "there are two thoroughly legitimate ways for academic faculty members to dispense knowledge: first, through the courses taught...and second, through publications and papers addressed primarily to colleagues."[1]

Graduate Assistants

Recognizing that college instructor personnel are often costly to a single project, many organizations have found advantage in utilizing graduate assistants to inexpensively supplement staff efforts. This approach capitalizes on the expert image of college personnel and provides the resources of the university to the project.

Directors of Existing Cooperative Projects

Perhaps unique to shared services, a cadre of personnel already exists which could be exploited for the dissemination of the concept of educational cooperatives. Information gathered by the Rural Shared Services Project of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory revealed that practically every state has one or more cooperative projects now operational. Because of their familiarity with the basic concept, the laws of the state in which they are operating and the likelihood of their being acquainted with key opinion leaders and change agents within their respective states, the personnel of the shared service projects now existent could most likely be recruited to assist in disseminating the shared service concept.

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[1]Ibid.

Service Organization Personnel

Existing in most communities are those groups commonly referred to as service clubs or organizations. Frequently such organizations undertake projects, within their service region, designed to aid youth. It is conceivable that the national board of directors of such a service group could be persuaded to undertake the dissemination of an educational concept as a service project. Examples might include the National Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees), Lions International, or Kiwanis.

ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES

Numerous organizations exist through which educational concepts might reasonably be disseminated. Rural Shared Services is a concept of educational organization that requires wide dissemination. Results of a study conducted under the direction of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory by Northern Montana College personnel indicate that educational improvement does result when districts cooperate to provide services they would otherwise be unable to provide on a single-district basis.

U. S. Office of Education

Possessing the machinery to publicize and distribute information regarding education, the U. S. Office of Education could establish a department committed to rural education and exploit shared services as one of its major components.

State Departments of Education

Because they are legally required to provide direction for education within their respective states, State Departments of Education could profitably provide consultant services to local districts (especially in those states with a high percentage of rural districts) in the reasons for, and the advantages of cooperative effort among small districts.

College and/or Universities

A commonly heard quotation is to the effect that "lasting educational change must originate with institutions of higher education." From this premise colleges could beneficially develop course syllabi around rural education in general, and specifically, cooperative efforts among rural schools for the improvement of instruction.

Professional Organizations

A variety of professional organizations, with existing mechanisms for dissemination of information regarding educational programs and ideas among their members, might be employed to create an awareness in the professional ranks of the value of rural shared services. These groups include: The Association of Classroom Teachers, Association of School Administrators, Elementary School Principals Association, The National Congress of Parents and Teachers, etc.

National Federation for the Improvement of Rural Education.

A newly created organization which has as its primary objective the improvement of rural educational opportunity. Having a broad geographical base, it is conceivable that this organization (NFIRE) could utilize its existing membership and channels of communication to disseminate information relative to this educational concept.

ERIC

Established primarily as information collection and distribution centers, it is not unreasonable to expect that the numerous ERIC Centers across the nation could expand their function to actively prepare and distribute information.

Private Foundations

Many corporate foundations have focused attention on education. Notable among these are the Ford Foundation, Kellogg Foundation, Esso Foundation, Danforth Foundation and the Noyes Foundation. It is conceivable that one or more foundations would find advantage to publicizing shared services as a function of their organization.

DISSEMINATION MEDIA

A second factor to consider in any dissemination process is the media to be exploited. Listed briefly are the more frequently employed "symbols other than language that assist in getting attention."[1]

Public Press

Delineation is made here between the printed publications discussed later in this section and media described as "professional journals, local and regional newspapers, and nationally circulated periodicals." Three methods of dissemination may be exploited through the press: professionally written articles, news releases and commercially prepared advertisements.

Television

Film clips (spots) of a commercial nature could be prepared for release over established television networks. These could be released as either paid advertisements or as public service announcements.

Radio

As with television, spot announcements could be prepared and distributed to radio stations serving rural regions. Again, these could be exploited as paid advertisements or as public service releases.

Although not exhaustive of the communication media available, e.g., one could imagine aircraft dropping leaflets in rural communities or creation of a musical jingle, the above list incorporates the range of approaches which suggest the more effective approaches reaching rural audiences.

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[1]Culbertson, J. A. Paul B. Jacobson, and Theodore L. Reller, Administrative Relationships. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1960, p. 408.

Direct Mail

Brochures and flyers are devices employed by industry to attract attention to their product. Attractively designed, they are usually regarded as attention getters designed to solicit further inquiry into the uses of the product.

Telephone "Hot Line"

A central depository of information relative to the product could be established. This central depository would be provided with a toll-free WATS telephone number which interested persons would dial to obtain information and/or service. A requirement of this approach is the necessity for somehow publicizing the telephone number itself, not to mention the kind of information available on call.

Films

Films of exemplary activities illustrating the best utilization of the shared services concept could be prepared.

Videotape

Videotape presentations could be prepared following the same format as the films. Because of the yet limited access to videotape monitors in most rural regions, this would probably require a person to transport the tape along with a monitor, to make the presentation.

Audiotape/Slide

As the category title implies, a series of slides visually presenting the concept and activities of shared services could be prepared and coordinated with an audiotape for distribution.

Television/Film

By combining the media of film and television, a twenty-five or thirty minute film could be prepared and released over commercial television networks.

Printed Publications

A common approach to dissemination of information is through the printed word. This approach, while possessing the advantage of recording the information for permanency, often reaches a limited audience. Books and voluminous reports frequently become dust collectors in library stacks. Books and reports, however, are necessary as supportive resources for providing information.

COST CONSIDERATIONS

One of the more definitive studies connecting the relative costs and efficiencies of employing varied techniques of information dissemination appears in the current issue of SRIS Quarterly.

Reporting on research Project RA-TOD, Roger Harrell introduced seven types of information dissemination media into four Texas communities. His findings indicate:

1. The effect of "adding" mass media to disseminate information to nonprofessional publics is statistically significant in terms of awareness of and opinions about that information.
2. The data reported in this study would indicate that mailouts to patrons in school districts have slightly less than 75 percent chance of being opened and read.
3. The Negro and the Caucasian apparently rely on television as the chief source of information from within the school district, excluding the mailout. The second most mentioned source, excluding the mailout, was the newspaper. Radio, apparently, had little value in meaningful dissemination of information on early childhood education.
4. The face-to-face confrontation of parents and instructors in this project was not any more effective than other methods in significantly reducing the number of incorrect responses by the participants, nor was it efficient, dollar-wise.
5. The data suggest that METHOD 3, cumulative use of dissemination media--booklets, letters, radio, newspapers, television--is the best means of disseminating information to nonprofessional publics in terms of cost per parental unit and the amount of awareness of ways parents can be most helpful to their preschool children.[1]

While Harrel confined his test to the effectiveness of various communications media and approaches applied to nonprofessional publics, it is conceivable that those approaches his study found effective would prove equally appropriate when applied to school board members, legislators, and lay opinion leaders.

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[1] Roger L. Harrell, "A Comparison of Techniques of Dissemination in Four East Texas Communities," SRIS Quarterly, 2:20-24 (Winter 1969).

CONCLUSION

Two assumptions seem appropriate: (1) that motivation for dissemination of information lies primarily with the desire to implement dissemination procedures, not with testing of given procedures, and (2) that financial consideration precludes nationwide dissemination. Given these assumptions, the following models would seem most appropriate.

A Contiguous-State Geographical Area Should Be Selected

The reasoning here is to the effect that cost efficiency would be diminished if several noncontiguous states were selected. With the desire to implement as the primary focus, greater saturation would likely occur from such experiences as reception of television signals across state lines, or distribution of newspaper across state lines. Additionally, personnel from school systems of one state often have dialogue with personnel from adjoining states--a selection of noncontiguous states would reduce this possibility.

An Organization Uniquely Equipped for Development of Dissemination Packages Should be Selected

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon, has available graphic arts personnel, plus the technology for producing mail-out materials, films, slides, transparencies, etc. Being presently tooled up for such an undertaking, along with their history of attention to the problems of rural education, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory should be selected to spearhead the dissemination of Rural Shared Services information.

Following the format the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory has effectively used in the past for introducing newer educational

developments to the ultimate "user," a combined approach would result. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, through its "Series 400" program, would develop attention-getting brochures accompanied by information fact sheets. These brochures and fact sheets could be made available to each of the fifty State Departments of Public Instruction, to schools of education, to shared service projects throughout the nation, to ERIC centers and to others who might request them.

A series of news releases would be prepared for distribution to news media throughout the region selected. This model does not foresee the need to prepare film clips for television nor radio.

Personnel Involvement

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory would provide leadership in the form of personnel who have been thoroughly oriented to the shared service concept and existing practices.

A workshop conference would be held to which persons from State Departments of Public Instruction, from colleges in the region selected that have indicated an interest in rural education, and existing cooperative projects would be invited. These persons would be provided with information relative to the present status of shared activity within their states and throughout the nation, equipped with a slide/tape presentation, and supplied with the brochures and fact sheets described above.

This workshop would serve a twofold purpose--to stimulate an interest and desire among the participants to disseminate information about shared activity; and to acquaint those conducting the workshop with the problems that might prove to be unique to a given state or area. From the conference

a cadre of trained personnel would emerge with the purpose of publicizing and disseminating shared services within the contiguous-state region. This cadre of personnel would then return to their respective states with a program for publicizing shared services. Throughout the ensuing year their efforts would be directed toward presentations at professional and civic group meetings, meeting with local school boards and superintendents, and organizing workshops within their own areas following the format of the conference they had attended. News releases would be provided periodically to correlate with their activities. A dissemination project director from the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory would visit these persons regularly to assist them in organizing their activities and provide stimulation for continued effort.

Assessment

Evaluation of the dissemination approach used would consist of keeping careful written records of the major transactions conducted during the process. These would be supplemented by tape recording as pertinent. These materials would be analyzed and a case study would result. Personnel at the State Department of Education would be requested to note any actions that appear traceable to the activity associated with the dissemination procedures used in their own states. Other data would be collected that indicate the impact this project has had on the State Department of Education, other organizations with respect to their committment to Rural Shared Services, and how school district programs for rural youth were affected.